



The Honorable Joel Johnson
S-1286 House Office Building
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909

April 27, 2016

Dear Representative Johnson,

On behalf of the 115 organizations of the Joint National Committee for Languages and the National Council for Languages and International Studies, I write today to oppose H.B. 5463, scheduled to be heard in the Committee on Workforce and Talent Development **tomorrow, April 28, 2016**. While computer coding may be a valuable skill set in some technical fields, there is simply no substitute for the benefits of foreign language education.

American youth deserve to be globally competitive. Knowledge of another language has also been shown to correlate to improved literacy in English, as evidenced by achievement on test scores; a greater likelihood of attending and finishing college, across all groups but especially for English Language Learners and children of low socioeconomic status; and higher lifetime earnings. Furthermore, languages continue to be vital to our national security and economic growth. A recent employment trends survey by the Michigan State University Collegiate Employment Research Institute revealed that over half of U.S. businesses track their employees' foreign language skills, 35 per cent give an advantage to multilingual applicants, and one in six has lost business prospects due to a lack of employees with language skills.

It is the position of JNCL-NCLIS and its organizational members, among them the Michigan World Language Association (MiWLA), that computer coding should not be offered as a substitute or alternative to a world language course. The two teach fundamentally different skill sets—employed under different circumstances, for different purposes, and with different effects on the individual. Implementing this policy would also pose a host of logistical problems in areas such as the allocation of funds to foreign language departments for curriculum and professional development and the acceptance of students' foreign language credits at out-of-state universities.

By supporting its language programs through the foreign language requirement and an emphasis on quality programming, the state of Michigan would better equip its future generations for a globalized, 21st century economy. We respectfully ask for your support in opposing Michigan H.B. 5463 and are available to answer any questions.

With Best Wishes,

William P. Rivers, Ph.D.
Executive Director

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